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## THE HISTORY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT CANON IN THE SYRIAN CHURCH.

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(Concluded.)\*

### PRELIMINARY INVESTIGATIONS.

#### II. THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES AND THE EPISTLES.

##### 1. *In the Doctrina Addai.*

The Doctrina Addai speaks of the Acts of the Apostles and the epistles as follows : " But the law, and the prophets, and the gospel, which ye read every day before the people, and the epistles of Paul, which Simon Peter sent us from the city of Rome, and the Acts of the twelve apostles, which John, the son of Zebedee, sent us from Ephesus ; these books read ye in the churches of Christ, and with these read not any others, as there is not any other in which the truth that ye hold is written, except these books, which retain you in the faith to which ye have been called." (P. 44.)

There are no quotations made either from the Acts of the Apostles or from the epistles of Paul, a fact which is in harmony with the purpose of the book. The catholic epistles and the Revelation are not included in the canon of the church.

The bearing of the quotations on the history of the canon may better be discussed under the reconstruction of the history of the canon later on. Here it suffices to have quoted the testimony and the extent of the canon as given in the Doctrina Addai.

##### 2. *In Aphraates.*

Aphraates quotes from the Acts of the Apostles several times. Of Paul's epistles he quotes Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Timothy, and Titus ; the letter to the Hebrews is also cited as Pauline throughout. He does not cite 2 Thessalonians and Philemon. There is no trace of the catholic epistles and the Revelation. The passages cited by Wright as referring to 1 Peter 4:18 and 1 John 3:24 ; 4:15 have

\*See the AMERICAN JOURNAL OF THEOLOGY, Vol. IV, pp. 64-98.

been shown by Zahn not to refer to those passages. In the first passage it is a citation from "*Solomon*" (Prov. 11:31); the other citation is evidently taken from the gospel of John, and not from the epistle. Strangely enough, Parisot and Gwynn still maintain, with no ground, that he uses 1 John, and they infer from it his use of the rest.

The extent of his canon as regards Acts and the epistles of Paul is the same as that of the *Doctrina Addai*. He quotes a good deal from them, most of his quotations being from 1 Corinthians.

Whether Aphraates' epistle text is the same as that of the Peshitta or not is a question which we must now seek to answer. The Peshitta has, in addition to the epistles of Paul, also the epistle of James, 1 Peter, and 1 John, which Aphraates has not. Is his epistle text, in spite of this, the same as that of the Peshitta, which might not yet have had these epistles in Aphraates' time, or is it different? This necessitates

*A Comparison of the Acts and Epistles in Aphraates with those of the Peshitta.*

Acts 14:22, A ॥  
 صَادَقُنَا فَعَلَّمَنَا، P ॥  
 صَادَقُنَا فَعَلَّمَنَا. The Greek has διὰ  
 πολλῶν θλύψεων = A.—19:3, A ॥  
 صَادَقُنَا فَعَلَّمَنَا، بَخْرَى صَادَقَنَا  
 صَادَقَنَا، P صَادَقَنَا، أَخْبَرَى بَخْرَى، صَادَقَنَا صَادَقَنَا.

but some MSS. have  $\tau\hat{\eta}$  σαρκί. The  $\epsilon\hat{\iota}s$  τὸ καρποφόρησαι τῷ θανάτῳ may have been differently translated.—8:9a, A reads  $\omega\hat{\iota}\sigma\hat{\iota}\tau$ , P  $\omega\hat{\iota}\sigma\hat{\iota}\tau$ ; A  $\omega\hat{\iota}\sigma\hat{\iota}\tau$ ,  $\omega\hat{\iota}\sigma\hat{\iota}\tau$ , P  $\omega\hat{\iota}\sigma\hat{\iota}\tau$ ,  $\omega\hat{\iota}\sigma\hat{\iota}\tau$ ; A  $\Delta\hat{\iota}\tau$ , P  $\Delta\hat{\iota}\tau$ .—8:9b, A, “the Spirit of God;” but P, “the Spirit of Christ,” thus reversing the order of vss. 9a and 9b. This again is paralleled by other Greek MSS.

plural; A نَذِرًا مُنْهَى, P نَذِرًا مُنْهَى.—9:6, A نَذِرًا مُنْهَى, P نَذِرًا مُنْهَى اف صَدَقَهُ; A نَسِيَّة, P نَسِيَّة; A مُنْهَى, P مُنْهَى. This last difference is attested by other texts also.

Gal. 3:11, A لَا مُنْهَى اف لَا مُنْهَى, P لَا مُنْهَى اف لَا مُنْهَى, اف مُنْهَى مُنْهَى مُنْهَى لَا مُنْهَى.—5:12, A لَا مُنْهَى اف لَا مُنْهَى, اف لَا مُنْهَى اف لَا مُنْهَى, omits لَا مُنْهَى. The Greek ἀποκόψονται is understood by Aphraates in the same way as it was understood by Chrysostom and Theophylact, "utinam genitalibus exscindantur illi qui vos conturbant." (Cf. BERT, p. 177.)—6:1, A لَا مُنْهَى, P لَا مُنْهَى.

Eph. 2:6 (twice), A مُصْنَعٌ, P مُصْنَعٌ.

1 Thess. 4:17, A لَا مُنْهَى اف لَا مُنْهَى, P لَا مُنْهَى اف لَا مُنْهَى اف لَا مُنْهَى اف لَا مُنْهَى اف لَا مُنْهَى.

1 Tim. 1:13, A لَا مُنْهَى, P لَا مُنْهَى اف لَا مُنْهَى.

2 Tim. 3:16, A مُصْنَعٌ, اف مُصْنَعٌ, P مُصْنَعٌ اف مُصْنَعٌ.

Hebr. 4:9 (three times), A لَا, اف لَا مُصْنَعٌ اف لَا مُصْنَعٌ, P لَا, اف لَا مُصْنَعٌ اف لَا مُصْنَعٌ.—12:1, A لَا, اف لَا مُصْنَعٌ اف لَا مُصْنَعٌ, اف لَا مُصْنَعٌ اف لَا مُصْنَعٌ, P لَا, اف لَا مُصْنَعٌ اف لَا مُصْنَعٌ. —12:13, A لَا, اف لَا مُصْنَعٌ اف لَا مُصْنَعٌ.

The comparison of the text of the Acts and the epistles which Aphraates used with the text of the Peshitta shows that on the whole these texts are closely related to each other. There are numerous instances where A = P.

But one cannot deny that Aphraates differs in a good many passages from the Peshitta in such a way that the differences cannot be explained on the ground of inaccurate quotation, even if we allow all legitimate freedom for quotations from memory. For, strangely enough, quite frequently the variation in Aphraates can be found also in Greek texts. How could he, for instance, have gotten from the Peshitta that strange reading of 1 Cor. 15:51 which he quotes three times? He agrees with the best Greek MS., א, while P has the ordinary reading. If the canon holds good here that the more difficult reading is the older and more original, then A has here an older text than P. Again in 1 Cor. 15:55 A's reading is the regular reading of the Greek MSS., while P's is by no means so common. In 1 Cor. 9:5 both texts represent two different traditions of the Greek text. Besides these variations there are different translations of the same Greek text, some occurring so often as to leave no room for the thought that this is an inaccurate

quotation of A from P; *e. g.*, Hebr. 4:9 (thrice); Eph. 2:6 (twice); 1 Cor. 15:40 (twice); 2 Cor. 5:18 (twice); and in one case at least the translation of a Greek word which Aphraates gives is also given by Crysostom and Theophylact, viz., Gal. 5:12 ἀποκόψονται = "utinam genitalibus exscindantur," P = "utinam praescindendo praescindantur."

All this points to a different text of the Acts and the epistles from that of P. The difficulty is that we have no other text. But there is no reason to believe that Aphraates knew Greek, and that he used a Greek MS. alongside of his Peshitta text. There must have been at least one different text from P for Acts and epistles; the case of the gospels would thus be paralleled. To my mind there is no doubt in regard to this.

Can we express any opinion as to the relation of this text to that of P? It used a different Greek text as its basis—that is plain from the preceding. Perhaps such passages as Acts 19:3, where A has, "Are ye baptized?" P = "With what are ye baptized?" 2 Tim. 3:16, A = "Everything which is *in the Spirit of God*," P = "Every writing which is *written by the Spirit of God*;" Rom. 1:3, 4, A ιοι, P ιοι; 1 Cor. 1:30; 1 Cor. 10:27, where A adds (with others) εἰς δεῖπνον, so as to make the Greek term καλεῖ more intelligible to the Syrians; 1 Cor. 15:40; 15:36-38; 2 Cor. 9:6—permit us to say (though only tentatively) that the Aphraates text had a more primitive and natural style, not so concerned to express the fine shades of difference in theology as P, *e. g.*, 2 Tim. 3:16; Rom. 5:14.

### 3. *Ephraim.*

While Aphraates used only the Acts of the Apostles and the epistles of Paul, including among them the epistle to the Hebrews, Ephraim uses also the catholic epistles and the Revelation, so that he quotes from every New Testament book that is in our Bible. Now, the Peshitta did not contain all of them; it omitted 2 and 3 John, 2 Peter, and Revelation. Where Ephraim quoted these passages from is a question. It may be that he quoted them from a Greek MS., but it is much more probable that already in his time there were translations of these books current, though they were not taken into the canon of the New Testament.

But, leaving these quotations alone, one naturally asks: Are Ephraim's quotations from the other books which are in the Peshitta like the text of P, or different from it?

Again I refer here to the collation made by Rev. F. H. Woods in *Studia Biblica et Ecclesiastica*, Vol. III, pp. 132 ff.

What strikes one first of all is the fact that in the main Ephraim quotes from the Peshitta. There are, however, also in Ephraim instances where he has a different translation of the same Greek text, *e. g.*, Eph. 4:3; 2 Cor. 7:2; Eph. 3:19. But they are not so frequent as in Aphraates.

There are also a few references in which Ephraim's variation is supported by Greek MSS., and he has therefore had a text which used a different Greek text from P.

Acts 5:41, E ~~τὰ πάσα τὰ~~, P ~~τὰ πάσα τὰ~~; E ~~τὰ πάσα~~, P ~~τὰ πάσα~~. "The first variant agrees with the Greek *ἀπὸ προσώπου τοῦ συνεδρίου*, the second is supported by Origen, the *Æthiopic*, and a few very late Greek cursives." (Woods.)

2 Cor. 5:21, E ~~τοῦ~~, P ~~τοῦ~~; A ~~τοῦ~~, but also = P, Greek *ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν*.

Gal. 5:22, E the singular *καρπός* = Greek, P *καρποί*.

The variants are few and not as significant as those of Aphraates. Nevertheless, the influence of another version than the Peshitta cannot be denied. But that influence is not half so strong as in Aphraates. The Peshitta text, as in the gospels, so also for Acts and epistles, is gradually gaining the upper hand, and it cannot have taken long before it stood, if not alone, yet *supreme* in the field.

It will be well to compare at this point the extent of the different canons:

*The Extent of the Canon of the Doctrina Addai.*

1. The Diatessaron.
2. The Acts of the Apostles
3. The epistles of Paul, probably without the epistle to the Hebrews.

There is no trace of 1, 2, 3 John, 1 and 2 Peter, James, Jude, and Revelation.

*The Extent of Aphraates' Canon.*

1. The four gospels in the Diatessaron and the separate gospels.
2. The Acts of the Apostles.
3. The epistles of Paul, including the epistle to the Hebrews.

There is no trace of 1, 2, 3 John, 1 and 2 Peter, James, Jude, and Revelation.

*The Extent of the Canon of the Peshitta.*

1. The four gospels.
2. The Acts of the Apostles.

3. The epistles of Paul, including the epistle to the Hebrews.

4. The catholic epistles, 1 Peter, 1 John, James.

The Peshitta omits 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John, Jude, and Revelation.

*The Extent of Ephraim's Canon.*

1-4 is like the Peshitta, but he cites also from 2 and 3 John, 2 Peter, Jude, and Revelation.

III. CANONICITY.

Now it will be asked: Did Aphraates regard these New Testament books really as canonical, or does he simply refer to them? Had he really a *fixed New Testament canon*?

There can be no doubt about this. In fact, we do not expect anything else, if we remember that he lived in the fourth century. But that might, perhaps, not be decisive in the Syrian church, which at Aphraates' time had scarcely existed two centuries. Aphraates, however, uses the entire Bible, the Old and the New Testament, as the court of final appeal. There is no difference for him in authority; he has no grades of inspiration or canonicity. The New Testament stands on the same level as the Old Testament. He uses the same formulas of introduction in citations from the Old Testament and the New Testament. Mostly, of course, he uses for the Old Testament the form: "The prophet says," "David says," "He speaks in the prophet," "The living mouth speaks in the prophet," "It is written," "The Scripture testifies," "He says in the Scripture." He introduces eighty-six quotations from the Old Testament, with, "It is written." For the gospels his introductory phrases are mostly, "Our Lord says," but also "The Scripture says" (BERT, p. 145), "The Lord writes" (p. 60), "The King has written us thus" (p. 215), "He has written us beforehand" (p. 346), "Jesus, who is called your teacher, has written you" (p. 329), "It is written for you in the Word" (p. 330). There are fifteen citations from the gospels which he introduces with, "It is written." Statements like these leave no doubt that the book is referred to; that not only the words of Jesus are canonical, but the gospels containing those words.

From the Acts of the Apostles he quotes only four times, introducing the citations with, "Our Redeemer says," also "The blessed apostles proclaim," "The Acts of the twelve apostles tell us about this," "The preaching of the twelve apostles testifies to us;" which shows that the book itself is referred to.

The epistles of Paul are, almost all of them, introduced by, "The apostle says." Never mentioning Paul's name in an introductory phrase, he regards Paul as *the* apostle *κατ' εξοχην*. Once only a letter

as such is referred to by name: "The blessed apostle writes in the first epistle to the Corinthians and says" (p. 10). But he has also four quotations introduced with the formula, "It is written": 1 Tim. 1:9 (p. 21); 1 Cor. 6:5, "Again in another letter it is written;" 2 Cor. 6:16 (p. 274); Gal. 6:6 (p. 368). Two quotations are not counted here which may be just as well from the Old Testament as from Rom. 4:3.

Aphraates had, then, a fixed New Testament canon, which stood on the same level of authority as the Old Testament. And in this New Testament canon he distinguishes no degrees of authority; all the books are on the same plane.

The question which now faces us is: What is *the principle on which Aphraates bases his canonicity?* It is not necessary to inquire what is the principle of the Doctrina Addai and Ephraim, because Aphraates is a true representative of the whole Syrian church, which they are not. He is no acute theologian, who can draw hairsplitting distinctions; he is a thoroughly practical man, with a good deal of common-sense. His principle of canonicity will, therefore, be the principle of the whole church. Of course, we have to remember that he received his canon from the church, and would therefore accept it because it was generally accepted in the church. But his principle was therefore not the traditional. There is no hint of such a principle in his writings.

Why does he regard *the gospels* as canonical? Because they contain the words of our Savior. This appears over and over again. Nearly all of his quotations are, as already remarked, introduced by, "The Lord" or "Our Savior says." He does not think at all of an apostolic basis. The writers of the gospels are for him a matter of indifference; not even once is a single name of the evangelists mentioned. Parisot says he mentions John, but everyone who notices the quotations will see that this is not John the evangelist, but John the Baptist.

Why does he regard the epistles of Paul as canonical? Because they contain the words of the inspired apostle. Here also, his citations are almost always prefaced with, "The blessed apostle says."

Why does he regard the book of Acts as canonical? Because it is the mouthpiece of the twelve apostles; they speak in that book.

The principle of the canonization of the gospels is: Christ speaks in them; of the epistles: the inspired apostle Paul speaks in them; and of the Acts: the twelve apostles speak in them.

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Now at last are we ready to turn to a reconstruction of the history of the New Testament canon in the Syrian church.

RECONSTRUCTION OF THE HISTORY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT CANON IN THE SYRIAN CHURCH.

The earliest phases in the history of the New Testament canon in Syria are still veiled in darkness. However, the discovery of the *Sinaiticus* makes it plain that there was a great deal of activity displayed in the early Syrian church in regard to the text of the New Testament, or, better, of the gospels. It is probable that the two texts, *Ss* and *Sc*, are only specimens or representatives of other texts. The relative independence of these two texts leads one to think that there must have been made many translations of the gospels, which were more or less independent of each other. As more churches were built in the different towns and villages, the desire, the necessity, was felt to have a copy of the gospels, at first not for private use, but for the common worship in the church. They could not use the Greek originals; they needed a Syriac translation. How many texts there were we shall probably never know. I do not think that there is one type of the Old Syriac text; there must have been many. The task, therefore, will be to determine which of them is the oldest text. But we must not think that that oldest text was in general use in the entire church. Other texts slightly younger were probably used by others as the church grew. They were, then, not copies from the Old Syriac, but different translations. But all this must, in the nature of the case, be a matter of conjecture. It is founded only on the relative independence of the two texts represented by *Ss* and *Sc*, and also of *P*. Again, we can say with no great amount of certainty, but with a good deal of plausibility, that at first not all the four gospels had been translated, but probably only one, then two, then three, then four. They were current in this single form. This is indicated by the different order in which the gospels stand in *Ss* and *Sc*. It is also very likely, as Professor J. Rendel Harris has shown, that an account of the passion was in existence in harmonistic form. This would be very natural, considering how great an emphasis the early Christians laid on the death of Jesus Christ, almost to the exclusion of the life which he lived in Palestine.

But we are on the ground of mere conjecture, however plausible and natural it be, until we come to the *Sinaiticus*. That is, as we have seen, the oldest form of the gospels of the Syrian church which we have in our possession. The Greek text which underlies it belongs evidently to the first half of the second century; of it the remark of Credner about *Codex Bezae*, to which, as we have seen, this text is closely related, holds good:

Veränderungen wie diese konnten in der katholischen Kirche nur bis um die Mitte des zweiten Jahrhunderts mit dem Text der Evangelien vorgenommen werden, denn nach dieser Zeit hat die Behauptung eines göttlichen Ursprungs der neutestamentlichen Schriften in derselben allgemeine Anerkennung gefunden. Dieses Dogma lässt keine solche Behandlungsweise des Textes mehr zu, wie dieselbe mit dem Texte unserer Handschrift vorgenommen ist. Dann würde unserer Handschrift ein Text aus dem zweiten Jahrhundert zu Grunde liegen.

The same holds also good of Sc; but we shall speak of that later.

The translator of Ss was faithful to his original; but his aim was to give a good, forcible, and popular translation; he did not want to sacrifice the good Syriac to a very literal translation of the Greek. There are, then, in his translation certain minor points where he translates freely, just as we should expect from him. For him the substance was the main thing, and deep reverence for the letter is not one of his characteristics, which does by no means reflect on the faithfulness of his translation, but is nevertheless a sign that the books as such were not yet regarded as canonical.

Now, a few years later, about 172-5 A. D., Tatian made his *Diatessaron*, and it took possession of the field at once. It can easily be understood that it should be used more than the separate gospels. It was much more convenient for the common people, and also for the reading in the church services, than the separate gospels. Moreover, it will be remembered that Christianity was at first only the religion of a minority; but with Abgar III., 176-213 A. D., it became the national religion. This great change coincided, then, with the origin of the *Diatessaron*. And it is due to this fact, in addition to its convenience, that it became the gospel book of the Syrian church, and that the separate gospels had to give way. This was, however, possible only on two conditions: (1) that the four separate gospels were not yet established by long use, which is quite in harmony with the result of our investigation; it was made about 160-70 A. D., perhaps between 150-70 A. D.; (2) that there was not yet a conception of the canonicity of the books as such. If that idea had already been present, such a substitution would have been impossible.

There can, however, be no doubt that even after the introduction of the *Diatessaron* the four separate gospels were used alongside of the harmony, especially by the educated classes, though probably not in the church services. That the separate gospels had adherents is seen by the fact that after the introduction of the harmony the Curetonian

gospels were translated. They are later than the Diatessaron, but they cannot be much younger; that the underlying Greek text shows. The origin of this text was due to the desire to have the separate gospels in a text which corresponded more closely with the Diatessaron. It can hardly be much later than 200 A. D. And then, about one hundred years later, there is another text current in the Syrian church, as we see from Aphraates. The separate gospels had enough adherents during all this time.

But still the main text was the Diatessaron. And now it may be laid down as a fact that at the end of the second century the Syrian church used *as a church* only the Diatessaron of Tatian, and this was, I have no doubt, already regarded as canonical about the year 200 A. D. And that for the following considerations:

It is natural to assume that the development of the idea of the canon in the Syrian church should follow on the whole the line which is followed in the Græco-Roman church. Now, there the first thing that was regarded as authoritative or canonical was the words of Jesus Christ, no matter whether they were handed down in oral or in written form. When the gospels had been written, *they* were not regarded as authoritative, but simply the words of Christ which they contained; not the books, but the words of Christ, were canonical.

As time passed on, and there was no longer an oral tradition on which the church could rely, it was quite natural that the written gospels should increase in dignity. Now not only the words, but also the deeds of Jesus Christ are regarded with interest, from which it was only one step to regard the whole contents, or the gospels themselves, as authoritative. Of course, the ground of the authority of the books lay ultimately in the fact that they contained the words of Christ. But there were quite a number of gospels; how to distinguish those which were more authoritative from the others was the great question. All reported the words of Christ, however they might differ in other respects. It took quite a long time till our four gospels were regarded as exclusively canonical. And what was the test applied? Why were they regarded as canonical and others not? Because they were written by apostles and apostolic men. Apostolicity became the principle of canonicity.

It is significant for the history of the canon of the New Testament in the Syrian church that it started at once with our four gospels; it had not to pass through that long process through which the Græco-Roman church had to go, and which ended by limiting the

number of the gospels which should be used in the churches to our four gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Thus the unknown translator of the Sinaiticus translated these four; Tatian compiled these four, and no others; Sc and P are translations of these only. No matter how often the gospels may have been translated into Syriac, no matter how many copies there may have been of single gospels in the Syrian church, there is absolutely no evidence that the Syrians have ever had in these early times apocryphal gospels. They did not need to separate other gospels from these four canonical gospels. That had been done already for them by the Græco-Roman church. They inherit at once the result of a long struggle.

This explains why the Syrian church has the much more primitive and natural principle of canonicity, and is at variance with the entire Græco-Roman church in this point. It regards these writings as authoritative because they contain the words and deeds of Jesus. It does not attach any importance whatever to the persons of the writers of the gospels. Aphraates, as late as 340 A. D., does not even once mention the name of one of them. The words and life of Jesus are their basis of authority; no matter who has written the reports of them. That they are a reliable source their universal acceptance by the Græco-Roman church had shown.

Bearing this in mind, we do not expect a long development. The gospel canon must soon become fixed. At about 200 A. D. they would say, "As it stands written in the gospel," meaning by "gospel" the book.

We see, then, that at the end of the second or at the beginning of the third century the Syrian church had a very peculiar canon, such as no other church, so far as we know, had, viz., a gospel harmony, the Diatessaron of Tatian. To the truth of this statement the *Doctrina Addai* witnesses when it says that after Addai had for some time successfully labored in Edessa, "a large multitude of people assembled day by day and came to the prayer of the service, and to the reading of the Old and New Testament, of the Diatessaron" (p. 34). This shows that the Diatessaron was their first gospel *canon*.

The next step in the development is indicated by the *Doctrina Addai*, when it says (p. 44): "But the law and the prophets and the gospel, which ye read every day before the people, and the epistles of Paul, which Simon Peter sent us from the city of Rome, and the Acts of the twelve apostles, which John, the son of Zebedee, sent us from Ephesus, these books read ye in the churches of Christ, and with these

read not any others, as there is not any other in which the truth that ye hold is written, except these books which retain you in the faith to which ye have been called."

There is evidently a distinction made between the law and the prophets and the gospel on the one side, and the epistles of Paul and the Acts on the other side. The gospel and the Old Testament are read daily. But the epistles and Acts have come later, which is indicated here by the sentences, "which Simon Peter sent us from the city of Rome," "which John, the son of Zebedee, sent us from Ephesus." They are directed to read these books also in addition to the gospel and the Old Testament, which they are accustomed to read every day in the service. The Diatessaron is plainly put on the same plane with the law and the prophets. The epistles of Paul and the Acts, though also authoritative, are not yet on the same level.

This is the first notice which we have about the epistles of Paul and the Acts of the Apostles in the Syrian church.

When they were first translated we do not know. Zahn suggests, on the basis of a remark of Eusebius, that Tatian had translated them and given them to the church.<sup>38</sup> But if nothing else could be said against this suggestion, one passage would seem to be conclusive, viz., the rendering of Rom. 1:3, which we find in Aphraates, "The apostle [by which always Paul is meant] witnesses: 'Jesus Christ was *from Mary, from the seed of the house of David*, through the Spirit of holiness.'" This passage, which makes that doctrine, which was so obnoxious to Tatian, so clear, and develops it more strongly than the Greek, seems hardly to have been written by Tatian. Tatian, who did not shrink from omitting the genealogies and every passage which pointed to Jesus' Davidic descent, would certainly in his *μεταφράσαι* of the epistles omit this reference, or, at least, would not make the doctrine much clearer than it is in the original Greek. I recognize, of course, that Zahn suggests that this passage is taken from the apocryphal letter of Paul to the Corinthians, on which Ephraim commented. But that cannot be proved. That Ephraim commented upon this third letter of Paul to the Corinthians is no reason to think that it was in his canon. There is no evidence that it ever formed a part of the canon of the Syrian church. Besides this, Zahn himself puts this suggestion under the head of "Problematisches." But the reference is plainly to Rom. 1:3.

<sup>38</sup> EUSEBIUS, *Eccles. Hist.*, IV, 29: "But they say that he [Tatian] ventured to paraphrase certain words of the apostle [Paul] in order to improve their style."

However, even if Tatian did not translate the letters of Paul, it must certainly have been done not very long after the translation of the gospels. It may have been fifty years, perhaps more. Just when it took place we cannot tell. The *Doctrina Addai*, however, which describes, as is commonly believed, the condition of the church as it existed in the period from about 200-250 A. D., would favor our pre-supposition that it was done about 230-50 A. D. Now, the question is: Can we rely absolutely on the statements of that document? As regards the statement that the Old Testament and the gospel and the Acts and the epistles of Paul were read in the churches, there can be little doubt that this is correct. But can we rely on the statement that the epistles of Paul were sent by Peter from Rome? Of course, Peter had nothing to do with it. He is introduced in accordance with the design of the writer to push the beginning of Christianity in Edessa back to the time of Jesus and his apostles. But can we infer from that statement that the epistles of Paul were imported from Rome? I do not think that the question can be absolutely answered in the present state of our knowledge about the Syrian church. All that can be said is that it is highly probable, if we take into account the fact that the Syriac text is very closely related to the so-called "Western" text, agreeing with it in many points where all the other texts differ. Moreover, the frequent intercourse between the two cities explains much.

Now, if that be so, that the epistles of Paul were brought into the Syrian church from Rome, then we must conclude that the epistle to the Hebrews, which all Syrians regard as Pauline, was not in that collection. For at that time it was not regarded as Pauline in Rome. This is confirmed by the fact that the text of the *Peshitta* shows, as is generally accepted, marks which indicate that it was made by a different translator. Then the epistle to the Hebrews must have come in later. When that took place we again do not know. But about eighty or a hundred years later we find Aphraates using it as Pauline. He quotes it in the same way as the other letters of Paul, and there is no trace that he knew that it was doubted elsewhere. The certainty with which he uses it as Pauline indicates that it must have been added to the Pauline collection not so very much later. Perhaps it came very soon afterward, perhaps twenty or more years later than the other letters. All this is based on the assumption that the epistles of Paul were brought from Rome to Edessa.

As soon as it can be shown, however, that the Syrian church received its Pauline collection, not from Rome, but from Alexandria, the argument falls to the ground, and we need not assume that the epistle to the Hebrews was ever wanting in the Syrian collection of Pauline letters. But that is not proved yet, though it must be said that Aphraates' use of it would favor this theory; the tradition in the *Doctrina Addai*, the close relation between the Syrian and the Western text, and the difference of the translators point the other way.

Did, then, the Syrian church in that time, 200-250 A. D., receive all the letters of Paul except Hebrews, and was none missing?

The homilies of Aphraates would seem to indicate that not all the epistles were in his canon. He omits to cite Philemon and 2 Thessalonians. Now, Philemon is so small and of such a character that we are not surprised that he does not quote it. But why does he not quote 2 Thessalonians? We have to remember that he does not quote so very many passages from the epistles altogether, and his method of quotation does not warrant us in making the assertion that it was not in his canon, in the face of the fact that it was universally accepted in the Graeco-Roman church. We must, therefore, conclude that his failure to quote 2 Thessalonians was due to accident, and that the Syrian church received, indeed, all the Pauline letters at that time.

When these epistles of Paul had been introduced they would undergo recensions, or there originated different translations of the epistles. Both these are seen in Aphraates and Ephraim. Certain passages show that the text, especially of Aphraates, was a more popular and free translation, so that this would be an earlier stage of the Peshitta text. Other passages show that there was a different translation from that of the Peshitta, because they are translations of different Greek readings. But since the bulk of the texts is the same, and the passages of this latter kind become much rarer in Ephraim, there is good reason to believe that both the Aphraates text and the Ephraim text mark simply two stages in the development of the Peshitta text.

The *Doctrina Addai* speaks also about the Acts of the twelve apostles, which they are directed to read in the churches. *Whence* it came is not known; for nobody regards Addai's statement, that John sent it from Ephesus, as historic. *When* it came can only be guessed at. It seems to have come about the same time as Paul's epistles. *How* it came nobody can tell. But I point to the fact that it came quite as

suddenly and quite as mysteriously into the canon of the Græco-Roman church.

To sum up, then, the development of the canon until 250 A. D.: There were originally the four separate gospels in use about 160-75 A. D. These were supplanted by the more convenient translation of the Diatessaron when Christianity became the national religion. About 200 A. D. the gospel canon is fixed; it is the Diatessaron.

In the time 200-250 A. D. the epistles of Paul, except Hebrews, and the Acts of the Apostles came in. Soon afterward the epistle to the Hebrews was introduced and added to the Pauline collection. At 338 A. D. we have the canon of the church comprising the Diatessaron of Tatian, the epistles of Paul, including Hebrews, and the Acts of the Apostles. Now, the whole method of Aphraates' quotation points to the fact that this canon was already for some time in existence. We should say, therefore, with a good deal of plausibility, that the Syrian church had a *fixed* New Testament canon already about 300 A. D., if not earlier. Of the catholic epistles and the Revelation there is no trace.

Meanwhile there was another movement active in the church, dating back as far as the beginning of Christianity in Edessa, insignificant and small at first, but its victory was inevitable. It was stated above that when the Diatessaron took the place of the separate gospels there were still a good number of adherents of the old version. They translated the Greek gospels again and again. On the church at large this had no influence at first; it used the Diatessaron. But the fact must be recognized that these men had on their side the unanimous consent of the Græco-Roman church; for nowhere else was a harmony used.

I do not mean to say that they knew this, and that they endeavored to substitute the four separate gospels for the Diatessaron. But it had naturally to lead to such a step.

The movement was well under way at the time of Aphraates. He quotes from the Diatessaron, but also very often, perhaps mostly, from the separate gospels. We can no more say, in his case, that the Diatessaron was his only gospel canon, because of his frequent quotations from the other gospels. The separate gospels were equally canonical for him, and, since he is a true representative of the church at large, also for the church. It could be only a question of time which form should ultimately prevail; for that they would retain two different forms in their canon would be impossible as time went on.

Ephraim still uses the Diatessaron, writing a commentary on it, but his quotations are mostly from the Peshitta. He seems to have used the Diatessaron more for his private use and for the arrangement of his lectures on the exposition of the gospels, though very probably it was also still used in the churches alongside of the four separate gospels. It was very natural that some would substitute the separate gospels in the form of the Peshitta about Ephraim's time; others would still use the Diatessaron. As always, so also here, there were two parties, the conservatives and the progressive liberals. Public opinion, however, strengthened by the unanimous action of the Græco-Roman church, must have been in favor of the Peshitta. This is expressed in the order of Rabbula, bishop of Edessa, 412-35 A. D., who says:

Let all the presbyters and deacons have a care that in all the churches there be provided and read a copy of the *distinct* gospels.

And soon the final step is seen in the destruction of the remaining copies of the Diatessaron by Theodoret, bishop of Cyrrus, 423-57 A. D., who tells about it as follows:

Tatian also composed the gospel which is called Diatessaron, cutting out the genealogies and whatever other passages show that the Lord was born of the seed of David according to the flesh. And not only did the members of his sect make use of this work, but even those that follow the apostolic doctrine, not perceiving the mischief of the composition, but using the book too *simply as an abridgment*. And I myself found more than two hundred such books held in respect in the churches of our parts; and I collected and put them all away and put the gospels of the four evangelists in their place.

With this we have reached the end of the development of the gospel canon in the Syrian church. The Peshitta held from now on the field; it has never been supplanted.

While this struggle of the gospels was going on, there was simultaneously with it the development of the Acts of the Apostles and the epistles. When the epistles of Paul and the Acts of the Apostles had come into the Syrian church, they would soon be bound together with the gospels. Now, since there were two parties, the one would have in its volume the Diatessaron and the Acts and epistles of Paul, the other, the separate gospels and the Acts and epistles of Paul.

It is very probable that their texts were different, the one set based on this MS. authority, the other on that. That would account for the differences in the quotations of Aphraates and Ephraim. Now, we have seen that Aphraates' canon did not contain more than the gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, and Paul's epistles, and we concluded that this

was the church's canon, so that then the Peshitta was not yet complete. It must, however, be admitted that the fact that Aphraates did not quote from any of the other books contained in the Peshitta might be explained by saying that he relied for his citations on the official canon of the church, and did not want to cite as authoritative letters which were not familiar to all and not contained in the people's Bible; so that this fact does not argue for the non-existence of these epistles in Syriac form at his time. It is very well possible that they existed already in Syriac translations, but were not yet canonized. But did we not say that Aphraates' principle of canonicity for the epistles was apostolicity: the inspired apostle speaks in them, therefore are they authoritative? Why did he, then, not accept these epistles of James, Peter (the first epistle), and John (the first epistle)? Now, while this is perfectly true, we must not deny the influence of the general opinion on any man. He would certainly have no objection on the ground of his principle to accept these books into his Bible. But it would, perhaps, take some time for him, as well as for the whole church, to do so. They were so accustomed to regard Paul as the apostle *par excellence*, so used to regard his word, besides Christ's, as alone authoritative, that such a change in this opinion could not be effected in a short time. We have seen that the principle of canonicity of the Syrian church voices itself in Aphraates. Paul's epistles were accepted because they were apostolic. Now, should it sooner or later be said that also other books were written by other apostles, who were just as eminent as Paul, the church would be inclined to accept them. There would be no reason, based on her principle, why she should not, and the fact is that she did, though not at once. The express prohibition in the *Doctrina Addai*, which was written about Aphraates' time, throws some light on this problem. "With these [the Old Testament, the gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, and the epistles of Paul] read not any others, as there is not any other in which the truth that ye hold is written, except these books, which retain you in the faith to which ye have been called." This remark points evidently to a time when the attempt was made to introduce other books into the canon of the church. What these books were we do not know. But it seems a safe conclusion that they were these three catholic epistles, 1 Peter, 1 John, and James. These had been translated and should be put into the canon. But as is always the case, there were men who were opposed to this, and to one of these opponents we owe that prohibition in the *Doctrina Addai*.

The time referred to may be adequately fixed. The *Diatessaron* was at that time the authoritative version for church use. This was

before the time of Aphraates; the epistles of Paul and the Acts were regarded as authoritative, which was also the case in Aphraates' time and earlier. Later than Aphraates it can hardly have been, because Ephraim already calls the Peshitta "our version," and quotes from these epistles. It cannot be much earlier than Aphraates, for in his writings there is no trace of the catholic epistles, and no word is said about any attempt to introduce them into the canon. It may be that in his time, or, at the latest, very few years later (345-50 A. D.), the epistles were introduced into the canon.

So much is certain: Ephraim knew them and quoted from them. But besides, Ephraim quotes also from 2 and 3 John, 2 Peter, Jude, and Revelation; he knew, therefore, *all* the books of our New Testament. In this he went farther than the Syrian church as a whole did. The Peshitta, which marks the final step of the church's canon, receives only James, 1 Peter, 1 John; the epistles of those three apostles could be classed with those of the great Paul; it admitted no others. It is important to recognize that Ephraim is here out of line with the church at large. This finds its explanation in the fact that he traveled much and came in contact with the canon of the Constantinople church. Besides, it is an open question whether he quoted these books from the Greek or from already existing Syriac translations. At any rate, the church did not follow him.

Perhaps a word should be said about his commentary on the apocryphal correspondence of Paul and the Corinthians. In the first place it should be noticed that it is not yet proved that this commentary was written by Ephraim. It may be an altogether later work. In the second place, even if Ephraim wrote this commentary, that does not prove that this apocryphal letter of Paul was in the canon of the Syrian church. There is no trace of it. And, then, Ephraim went, as we saw, farther than the church at large did. I am quite certain that it was not in the canon of the church.

But the Peshitta with James, 1 John, and 1 Peter was rapidly growing in the favor of the people. Ephraim differs very seldom from it; it is called by him "our version." After him it must have been used almost exclusively, and when the Diatessaron was removed, the Peshitta was supreme. From the first half of the fifth century it reigns alone. Subsequent attempts to supplant it have failed. It is *the* version of the Syrian church. With this the history of the New Testament canon is completed in the Syrian church. Its development has taken a long time and is absolutely unique in the history of the New Testament.